

**BOOK THE SIXTH--HERE AND THERE.**

**CHAPTER LV. MIRABEL SEES HIS WAY.**

Reaching the hotel at which he was accustomed to stay when he was in London, Mirabel locked the door of his room. He looked at the houses on the opposite side of the street. His mind was in such a state of morbid distrust that he lowered the blind over the window. In solitude and obscurity, the miserable wretch sat down in a corner, and covered his face with his hands, and tried to realize what had happened to him.

Nothing had been said at the fatal interview with Emily, which could have given him the slightest warning of what was to come. Her father's name--absolutely unknown to him when he fled from the inn--had only been communicated to the public by the newspaper reports of the adjourned inquest. At the time when those reports appeared, he was in hiding, under circumstances which prevented him from seeing a newspaper. While the murder was still a subject of conversation, he was in France--far out of the track of English travelers--and he remained on the continent until the summer of eighteen hundred and eighty-one. No exercise of discretion, on his part, could have extricated him from the terrible position in which he was now placed. He stood pledged to Emily to discover the man suspected of the murder of her father; and that man was--himself!

What refuge was left open to him?

If he took to flight, his sudden disappearance would be a suspicious circumstance in itself, and would therefore provoke inquiries which might lead to serious results. Supposing that he overlooked the risk thus presented, would he be capable of enduring a separation from Emily, which might be a separation for life? Even in the first horror of discovering his situation, her influence remained unshaken--the animating spirit of the one manly capacity for resistance which raised him above the reach of his own fears. The only prospect before him which he felt himself to be incapable of contemplating, was the prospect of leaving Emily.

Having arrived at this conclusion, his fears urged him to think of providing for his own safety.

The first precaution to adopt was to separate Emily from friends whose advice might be hostile to his interests--perhaps even subversive of his security. To effect this design, he had need of an ally whom he could trust. That ally was at his disposal, far away in the north.

At the time when Francine's jealousy began to interfere with all freedom of intercourse between Emily and himself at Monksmoor, he had contemplated making arrangements which might enable them to meet at the house of his invalid sister, Mrs. Delvin. He had spoken of her, and of the bodily affliction which confined her to her room, in terms which had already interested Emily. In the present emergency, he decided on returning to the subject, and on hastening the meeting between the two women which he had first suggested at Mr. Wyvil's country seat.

No time was to be lost in carrying out this intention. He wrote to Mrs. Delvin by that day's post; confiding to her, in the first place, the critical position in which he now found himself. This done, he proceeded as follows:

"To your sound judgment, dearest Agatha, it may appear that I am making myself needlessly uneasy about the future. Two persons only know that I am the man who escaped from the inn at Zeeland. You are one of them, and Miss Jethro is the other. On you I can absolutely rely; and, after my experience of her, I ought to feel sure of Miss Jethro. I admit this; but I cannot get over my distrust of Emily's friends. I fear the cunning old doctor; I doubt Mr. Wyvil; I hate Alban Morris.

"Do me a favor, my dear. Invite Emily to be your guest, and so separate her from these friends. The old servant who attends on her will be included in the invitation, of course. Mrs. Ellmother is, as I believe, devoted to the interests of Mr. Alban Morris: she will be well out of the way of doing mischief, while we have her safe in your northern solitude.

"There is no fear that Emily will refuse your invitation.

"In the first place, she is already interested in you. In the second place, I shall consider the small proprieties of social life; and, instead of traveling with her to your house, I shall follow by a later train. In the third place, I am now the chosen adviser in whom she trusts; and what I tell her to do, she will do. It pains me, really and truly pains me, to be compelled to deceive her--but the other alternative is to reveal myself as the wretch of whom she is in search. Was there ever such a situation? And, oh, Agatha, I am so fond of her! If I fail to persuade her to be my wife, I don't care what becomes of

me. I used to think disgrace, and death on the scaffold, the most frightful prospect that a man can contemplate. In my present frame of mind, a life without Emily may just as well end in that way as in any other. When we are together in your old sea-beaten tower, do your best, my dear, to incline the heart of this sweet girl toward me. If she remains in London, how do I know that Mr. Morris may not recover the place he has lost in her good opinion? The bare idea of it turns me cold.

"There is one more point on which I must touch, before I can finish my letter.

"When you last wrote, you told me that Sir Jervis Redwood was not expected to live much longer, and that the establishment would be broken up after his death. Can you find out for me what will become, under the circumstances, of Mr. and Mrs. Rook? So far as I am concerned, I don't doubt that the alteration in my personal appearance, which has protected me for years past, may be trusted to preserve me from recognition by these two people. But it is of the utmost importance, remembering the project to which Emily has devoted herself, that she should not meet with Mrs. Rook. They have been already in correspondence; and Mrs. Rook has expressed an intention (if the opportunity offers itself) of calling at the cottage. Another reason, and a pressing reason, for removing Emily from London! We can easily keep the Rooks out of your house; but I own I should feel more at my ease, if I heard that they had left Northumberland."

With that confession, Mrs. Delvin's brother closed his letter.